

Town of Washington

News and Calendar



April, 2006

The Island is Irish for a Day

"O the drums go bang, and the cymbals clang, and the horns they blaze away; a credit to old Ireland is McNamara's band!"

Well, we had drums – and bagpipes – for the second annual St. Patrick's Day Parade on Washington Island. Organized by Tim O'Jessen and Ed O'Neill, the marchers stepped out from the Island Electric Cooperative at 11:00 AM and headed down Main Road for Karly's, where green beer and corned beef and cabbage were consumed in prodigious quantities during the day.

The parade, which was much larger than last year's inaugural event, included dogs sporting green ribbons, children - including the eighth generation of the McDonald family On Washington Island - the American Legion color guard, a contingent of Red Hatters, and even a float of sorts. A good Irish time was had by all - and our parade was mentioned on Channel Two news.

Washington Island Community Health Program

By Carole Machek, RN, MA

Certainly we, the residents of Washington Island, live and work in a unique space. Living on an island, separated by 5 miles of water from the mainland world, we experience a sense of community and shared

and its small student enrollment. On-island employment opportunities are limited, often dependent on the influx of summer tourism to support more lean winter months. Our population is enriched by our residents who bring wide arrays of talents, abilities and interests. In addition, our community is attracting an increasing number of young retirees, drawn to the island by

the pristine beauty as well as the many opportunities for a lifestyle that is less harried. These are all good things and we can be proud of our island community and the quality of life here. However, aspects of our island life also create challenges to our future that must begin to be addressed today.

One important component necessary to maintain a high quality of life is the

ability to maintain our health and promote activities that support wellness throughout our lives. Our island population is an aging one – 21% of



Steve Reiss, bass drum; Bob Gillespie, bagpipes; and Tom Noonan, snare drum, made stirring music to encourage the marchers in the Washington Island St. Patrick's Day Parade.

endeavor not achievable within either large metropolitan centers or small rural communities. We have an interdependency that is unique and challenging. This uniqueness is played out in so many aspects of our life. Our excellent school faces financial challenges due both to its designation as a "property rich district"

Continued on reverse.

Priority needs for services and the major chronic conditions stated by those over 65 years of age are listed below:

Service Needs of 65 and older

Management of High Blood Pressure
Assistance with understanding Medical Bills
Assistance with physical therapy

Chronic Conditions of 65 and older

High Blood Pressure
Arthritis
Hearing Loss
Heart Disease

The most requested home health services were blood pressure checks, exercise programs physical therapy and help with pain management. Among younger people (18 to 49), depression was the most commonly reported chronic disease- tied with high blood pressure. 13% of responders under age 65 claim to have no health insurance and 16% of that group stated they failed to see a physician due to cost.

These data helped focus the WICHP's vision statement:

The Washington Island Community Health Program, in cooperation with the Island Medical Clinic and other Island resources, will empower and support island residents to make choices for healthy living and successful aging, to maintain safe and independent lifestyle, and to make informed decisions about their health through-out their lives.

Actions to achieve this mission include

- increasing the availability of supportive health care services to Island residents in need of home care
- increasing access to preventative health services
- providing assistance to understand and comply with medication regimes as prescribed by primary care providers
- connecting with volunteers or workers to assist individuals with activities of daily living when needed
- providing low cost or free access to services not covered by Medicare or other insurance reimbursement
- increasing access to health promotion activities throughout the age continuum
- providing support and access to respite care for family care givers

Although the initial focus is on our senior residents, all efforts of this program are designed to address health needs of all ages of island residents in need.

In order to make the WICHP a reality, seed money is needed. The Washington Island Foundation has sponsored a proposal to the Helen Bader Foundation in Milwaukee for start up funds. This proposal is currently under

review and determination will be known by June 2006. We are also looking at other foundations in Wisconsin for funding.

In an initial project, the WICHP is partnering with Neighbor to Neighbor to Neighbor Volunteer Caregivers of Door County, Inc; a United Way of Door County supported organization. Directed by Sandi Blevins, Neighbor-to-Neighbor began over 20 years ago and has been offering services to homebound, disabled and the elderly of Door County ever since. The first service to open on the island will be the Medical Equipment Loan Program. This will enable islanders to access medical equipment such as lift chairs, hospital beds, bedside commodes, bath benches, wheel chairs, canes and numerous other items on a short-term loan basis. All the equipment loans are free, but donations are gratefully accepted. Trinity Lutheran Church on Town Line Road has graciously offered to be the home base for the loan closet and equipment will be stored in the basement. We are in the process of organizing equipment that has been stored at the Town Office and ordering needed additions through the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program. The Loan Closet should be open for business by April 2006. Watch for updates in the WI Observer and the Town Newsletter for information about how to access this program.

The Recreation Center has generously offered space for the program operations. As we receive funding, we will post the phone number, availability times and array

of services offered.

The Washington Island Community Health Program is your program – and as such your comments, suggestions and assistance are not only welcome, but necessary if we are to meet health promotion and wellness needs of our island community. We look forward to working together to make our island a place where quality of life is reflected and respected in all aspects of our lives – physical, mental and spiritual and at all times of our lives.

Dutton Warehouse

Town Chairman